CHATTISGARH AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

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CHATTISGARH AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

nd and the People :

e borders of the Chattisgarh in the state of Madhya sh extend from latitude 18 degrees to 24 degrees and ude 80 degrees to 84 degrees. Its area is 52,650 e miles. The population is about one crore and 25 Included within the borders of the Chattisgarh are districts : Raipur, Durg, Bilaspur, Bastar, Sarguja, rh and Rajnandgaon In ancient times this area was n as Dakshin Koshala and also by various other s such as Ratanpur Raj, Dandakaranya, Gondwana ccording to historical sources, the use of the name tisgarh' is encountered for the first time in the works olk poet in the year 1487 A D.

ographically, Chattisgarh is divided into two regions: Chattisgarh and hilly Chattisgarh.

attisgarh is an area bountifully endowed by nature areas of land is suitable for rice cultivation. Hidden e earth are enormous mineral deposits of Iron ore, Lime Stone, Dolomite, Quartzite, Copper, Uranium, auxite, Felspar, Manganese and other ores, There are ich forest resources of Teak, Sal, Mahua, Tendu, Saja, nd other useful Timber trees In. the rivers Sheonath, nadi and Arpa. water flows all through the year.

sgarh is a large area in which. through time, a people distinct indentity have been negotiating the highways y-ways of history. Although these people speak a er of different languages, they possess a special culture

and loyalty which inspires them to devote themselves to the development of the region and its peoples. For long ages the people here have been tied to a feudal economic order. The special economic life of the adivasis of this region primitive communism-has almost become extinct under pressure from this feudal order.

Some examples of the traditional agriculture and industries of Chattisgarh are ;

1. Wood Carvings : The beautifully carved wooden sculptures of this region testify to the advanced artistry of the wood carvers.
2. Even today one can see scattered deposits of slag which give evidence of the advanced metallurgy practised in this region. The smelters of iron are an adivasi group called "Agherias".
3. "Kosta" group of people used to make cloth.
4. "Kalar" caste used to make alcoholic drinks from Mahua flower.
5. Small mountain streams were dammed and the water used for agriculture in accordance with the ancient techniques.
6. The practice of "Gota" was prevalent in agriculture accoreing to this, the entire community joined in tilling one person's fields; in return the owner of the land fed the entire community with non-vegetarian meal that day.
7. Joint hunting expeditions took place and the spoils divided equally among all the participants Even dogs got their shares.
8. Ioc was produced on the Palash trees.
9. The Kosa insects yielded silk, from which silk cloth was produced.

Pulses and oilseeds were produced in large quantities.

Chattisgarhi society was rich in artistic and musical expression. On occasions of marriages, festivals and on other occasions such as moonlit nights, the Chattisgarhi people joined together in beautiful choral songs. Chattisgarhi men and women celebrate their moments of happiness through various dances such as Sua, Rilo, Biha, Phag etc. Village gods, as well as certain common deities such as Budha Deo, Danteswari, Kankalin and Mahamaya are worshipped in the Chattisgarhi fashion. Kalchuri, Rajbans, and subsequently the Marathas and finally the English have ruled in Chattisgarh. Till 1947 the area was governed through various small feudal lords such as the kingdoms of Bastar, Rajnandgaon, Lohara, Raipur, Rattanpur, Bilaspur etc. These kingdoms fostered and influenced the people's life with the distinct cultural contributions. Brahminic culture is found only in the government administration, but in the rural culture the elected 'baigas' are predominant.

The languages and dialects spoken in Chattisgarh are mainly Chattisgarhi, Halbi, Gondi, and Oraon. In addition, Maria etc. are also spoken by a few people. In the towns Hindi is the medium of communication.

Under the British rule there was only a cotton mill at Rajnandgaon and one jute mill at Raigarh. Since independence, based on soviet and other foreign capital, numerous large industries have been established among which are the Bhilai Steel Plant, the Korba Aluminium Plant, Thermal Power Plants and Cement Plants etc.

The Social and Economic Status of Chattisgarh –

In spite of the presence of enormous resources of minerals, forests and fertile land, the people of Chattisgarh are very poor. For lakhs of people, the prospect of two

square meals a day remains a distant dream. Malnutrition 3
lack of education and ill health are rampant everywhere
From an economic and social point of view, the people o
Chattisgarh may be divided into three groups:-

1. People living in newly developed urban areas surround-
   ing modern industrial complexes.
2. Adivasi settlements scattered amidst the mountain on
   and forests. ıo
   ur
3. The plains:agricultural areas.

1) Industrial Area: Surrounding the giant modern industria
complexes established on the basis of foreign capita oc
(public sector) and some big Indian capital (private sec i
tor) a new type of urban civilisation has developed. Th S
ese urban conglomerations can be divided into 2 areas d

a) Urban areas provided with all modern amenitie
   ıe
   and
   a
b) Urban slums.

Among these modern industrial complexes of Chatt
sgarh are the steel city of Bhilai, the Aluminium city of
Korba, the cement city of Jamul, Akaltara, Mandhar etc
as well as the so-called cultural capital of Chattisgarh
Raipur. Of the people living in these cities, 90% are from
different states of India while 10% are original residents o
Chattisgarh Among those who live in the slums of th
city, alongwith Chattisgarhis live emigrant labourers from
the neighbouring states of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh an
Maharashtra.

2) People living in Settlements scattered among th
mountains and jungles are mainly adivasi
Amoung these, 10% are landless, 75% small pe
sants, 12% middle peasants and 3% rich peasant
The fertility of land is poor.

3) In the plain areas, Kurmis, Kalars, Telis, Adivasis and Harijans live. Among these 30% are landless, 40% small peasants, 20% middle peasants. rich peasants 8% and absentee landlords 2%. The fertility of the land is medium to excellent. Only 12% of the cultivated area is irrigated.

Among the business class, the majority of people are from outside Chattisgarh. In the villages, Marwaris have money - lending businesses, while in the urban areas, Punjabis are the usurers.

Among the sources of employment, Adivasis and other poor people work in the mines. But in recent times, mechanisation on the basis of capital and machinery supplied by "Socialist" Soviet Union is proceeding at a rapid pace, reducing the employment prospects for the poor

The Present Status of Madhya Pradesh and the Demand for Small States:

The Madhya Pradesh of today is an unnatural creation of state power, designed to control and administer the regional entities of the Malvi, Bundeli, Bagheli and Chattisgarhi nationalities. This is why in the fields of democratic process, administration, agricultural developments, the distribution of agricultural produce, the development of rural industry, the proper utilisation of the labour power of the people, scientific planning and alround progress, education, health and cultural developments the existing state power has proved it-self to be a conspicuous failure. In the semi-feudal, semi-colonial mode of exercise of state power the only object of the state machinery is to cow down the people by enforcing draconion laws. So, instead of state boundaries being determined through natural political processes, they are artificially created in order to suit the administrative convenience of state power. Thus, states such as

Meghalaya, Arunachal, Manipur and Haryana are created to suit administrative requirements;conversely, the demands for states such as Chattisgarh, Telengana, Jharkhand etc. are rejected since they are unsuited to the convenience of the same administration. As a result, the people are trapped in a feudal and semi-feudal political structure and productio- relation. The purchasing power in the rural areas gradually decreases and people have to face famine after famine. The hungry populace quitely await their death, in utter hopelessness. Neverthless, in the place of a silent populace the government keeps singing the songs of progress.

The Demand for a New Chattisgarh State is a Popular Democratic Demand :

The people want that the Chattisgarh region should develop. It is by no means in the present political structure, that the creation of small states will automoticall cure all the present ills. Neverthless, when the vast majorit of a nationality group feel that the creation of a smalle state on the basis of a distinct indentity will enable them t participate actively in contributing to the national progres and facilitate the appropriate and planned utilisation of th natural resources, and when they are ready jointly to wor towards this goal, then the fulfillment of this demand be comes a democratic right of the people. This democrat right must be granted. Today the Chattisgrah bourgeo and petty-bourgeois are becoming increasingly devoted and enthusiastic about the idea of a Chattisgarh stat Among the peasantry too, the idea that they should b granted a state of their own is becoming increasingly stron Hence, it is the duty of the working class to participa actively in this question, Unless the campaign is guided in definite direction and linked up with the question of th struggles for people's liberation, it may be diverted into th wrong channels; militant Chauvinism can harm this who campaign.

In India the question of nationality has always been iewed from the point of view of the British imperialists. Vhen what we call the freedom struggle transcended the mited interests of the comprador bourgeoisie and the capi- alists and become related to the long term people's ruggle for social liberation, the imperialists panicked. heir question was "Is there any such entity as the Indian ation ? Can this people living scattered over a land area f sub-continenatal proportions, divided by inumerable alls of race, language, society and culture ever be united nto a single nation ? it is not true that the only unity in ndia is a false unity imposed artificially by the British admi- istration?" In 1888, Sir John Strachy had gravely declared. There is no such thing as India nor will there ever be." India : its administration and progress.)

Sir John Sealey tells us, in "The expansion of England" 'The idea of regarding India as a nation is based on the ind of fundamental misconception that political science ries to dispel The name India does not refer to any politi- al entity, but like the terms Europe and Africa, has a urely Geographical connotatian. It is not co-extensive with ny national or linguistic group but contains many nations nd language groups".

In 1930, the reports of the simon Commission dwelt pon the heterogeniety of the Indian people, and on this asis had cast doubts upon the fundamental issues of the ndian freedom struggle. In these reports the national stru- ggle was referred to In these terms: "The huge popu- ation of India is influenced by the wishes of a small section f the people" In this "huge population" referring to the presence of 222 languages, the basic opposition of Hindu and muslim interests", etc a picture is painted of a colour- ful ponarama of a conglomoration of races and religions. Churchill had claimed that if the English left India, the air would be filled with the screams and noise of murders and

other disturbances. The British imperialists had opposed the Indian freedom struggle on the basis of the presence of different national indentities.

In reply to this, our bourgeois leaders laid stress on an emotional and idealistic unity. Tagore addressed a "great" unity amidst diversity" (vividher majhey milano mohan) and claimed that all the races were united in a single body (shak hum dal, pataan mogal, akdehe holo leen). Some bourgeois leaders were influenced by the claims of the imperialists, examples being Surendernath Banerji and motilal Nehru.

At this time, the bourgeois leaders were unable to give a scientific content to the cocept of the underlying unity of the distinct cultural indentities of the Indian nation. Or perhaps this was deliberately suppressed. Some communists, on the basis of the 1921 census report,stressed that class interests were the only genuine basis for national unity For instance, they pointed out that in Jamshedpur, where work takes place under modern conditions of production all races and nationalities work together, and no one paid attention to the national or racial identity of the person working beside him. By stressing only the class angle, they neglected the predominance of an agricultural economy in India, and of the nature of the consciousness of the Indian peasantry While the class angle may be applicable in Jamshedpur, the tribals of south Bihar give greater importance to the Jharkhand question. It is ironical, in this cotext, to note that it was the same Jamshedpur that was the scene, recently, of wide spread communal disturbances.

The State Power, Even today is Repeating the words of Churchill :

Diverting the people with the mirage of stable government the alternative of instabiliy that is held up before the people, reflects the conclusions of the Simon Commission the appeal to strengthen the hand of the central power

reminds us of Churchill's threat that the withdrawal of impe-
rialist forces would fill the air with the screams of the dying.
Is the unity of India even today, an artificial construction
imposed by the centre ? Will the slightest weakness on the
part of the centre result in the Balkanization of the country ?
Where is the unity in diversity of Tagore ? Occasional feeble
cries are heard demanding more autonomy for the states.
Even these cries are not backed up by any solid argument.
The real problems are cleverly camouflaged. Why has every-
body made a Guru out of the Simon commission on the
question of national integrity ? Why not admit the existence,
of distinct, national identities, and give primacy to, indeed,
harness the forces generated by the loyalty to national iden-
ty in order to tackle the wider questions of feudalism and
colonialism.

The different national groups among the Indian people
ve in different parts of the huge geographical region. For
itional historical reasons the development of these national
roups has occured in an unequal manner. The people of
me nation groups are very far advanced both economically
id socially, where as the people of other national group
e backward in all respects Among the group , the status
the Harijans and Adivasis is for worse even than the
erage in Chattisgarh. the people of the Adivasi and Hari
n groups constitute 60 to 65% of the population. For these-
asons, on the average, Chattisgarh is an extremely back-
ard area, as is already been brought out earlier

e people of Chattisgarh will have to be conceded the right to
vern themselves :

According to the teaching of Stalin, each national
oup has the right to shape its future according to the
shes of its people.

In Chattisgarh, in the near futur, the struggle for
right of national group to govern itself will proceed
ace. This is because the enormous Chattisghari popula-
n is dependent on agriculture, and the peasantry, especi-

ally the Adivasi peasantry, are particularly oppressed and explo ted. Because the land question is intimately connected w.th the national question and with this campaign, the peasantry will fight this battle with all their might, this prediction is borne out by our past historical experience Hence. the working class will also join this battle, in their aid. The national bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, if for nothing else then because it is in their interest the purchasing power of the peasantry, will join this campaign, or at least not oppose it.

2. The working class in Chattisgarh, with the experience of having successfully conducted numerous struggles, is in a position to lead this campaign Our red-green flag, is very well regarded among the adivasi peasantry- Hence this leadership will carry much weight.

3. The slogan of the Anandmargis and the Zemindars ''Chattisgarh for the Chattisarihs'' has proved ineffective. In this campaign, one national group will not fight against another national group.

4. People from different classes will unit on the basis of their respective class interests and class consciousness Hence there will be peace among the nation groups, while the struggle continues in order to secure the intrests of the different groups.

5. This campaign will incorporate the programmes of revolutionary trade union activities, boycott of alcoholism, the peasant and land questions, the question of the price of forest produce the question of educational and health services, struggles against every type of opperession, especially against the opperssion of women. Since the working class will see that these struggles have been in their own interest hence, no

only will the working class join the movement, but will provide it with selfless leadership.

Today the reasons for the backwardness of Chattisgarh are :

The super imposed economic relations and mechanisation of the colonial powers.

Feudal village economy.

Low productivity of land.

We cannot jump from feudalism to socialism. We can only begin a process of change over to socialism while passing through a process of capitalism. But keeping the lessons of history in view this process will have to be undertaken with great care in the rural areas under the leadership of the working class.

The working class will not remain content with this and will proceed one step ahead and form cooperative societies (not on the pattern of the present socities) and other such institutions and rapidly proceed towards a socialist economy and society.

In this campaign for national identity, the proletariat will discover its allies and unitedly fight its enemies.

In order to prevent this campaign from degenerating into militant chauvinism the answer to the question "who is a Chattisgarhi" will have to be sought right in the beginning of the campaign and this answer will have to be kept constantly in view. Chattisgarhis are those who within the geographical area of Chattisgarh live their lives through honest toil, who are prepared to devote their lives to secure the free-

dom of the people of Chattisgarh, who neither e
nomically nor in any other way conform to
scientific definition of the feudal class, who des
the end of capitalist relations, and who will
hinder the development of a democratic Chattisg
and who feel brotherhood towards the proleteri
of the world.

For the liberation of the proletariat, a revolutio
an absolute historical necessity. For the other progress
elements as well, a revolution, in the form of a qualita
change in the social order is felt to be necessary. The st
ggle for national self determination is a step in the di
tion of this qualitative change.

How are we working in Chattisgarh ?

We are engaged in a struggle against the pres
social order. We want to achieve a qualitative change
this order. But what is our concept of the alternati
Some comrades would say-the practical realisation of
alternative will come later, now just listen to my spe
We do not say this We feel we can only achieve our ob
tive through our active programmes. For this reason
search for an alternative in the process of carrying
every one of our programmes. The alternative to our
sent social order is a society under the leadership of
people, achieved in the course of people's democratic r
lution. The struggle for national identity will help to id
tify and unite all progressive elements in this effort.
achievement of a genuine socialist order is the next ste
this process.

हमार सपना के छत्तीसगढ़

जहां सब ला पीये के पानी मिलही,
जहां हर खेत में सिंचाई के साधन होही,
जहां हर हाथ ला काम मिलही,
जहां किसान ला पैदावार के सही कीमत मिलही,
जहां हर गांव में अस्पताल होही,
जहां हर लइका के सही पढ़ाई बर स्कूल होही,
जहां सब ला भुइयां अऊ घर मिलही,
जहां गरीबी, शोषण और पूँजीवाद नइ होही,

अइसन छत्तीसगढ़ कब बनही ?
जब किसान मजदूर के छत्तीसगढ़ में राज होही ।

अइसन छत्तीसगढ़ बनायबर संघर्षरत हावे,
छत्तीसगढ़ मुक्ति मोर्चा

हमारे देशप्रेम की पहचान...

हमारा छत्तीसगढ़

छोटा और सुन्दर राज्य छत्तीसगढ़

नये भारत के लिए नया छत्तीसगढ़

शोषण विहीन छत्तीसगढ़

हमारे सपनों का छत्तीसगढ़